

News

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Bureau of Labor Statistics

New York Office

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AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN NEW JERSEY: THIRD QUARTER 2004 **Hudson County's 5.6-Percent Wage Growth Leads State;** **Wages Down 6.9 Percent In Somerset County,** **Third Largest Drop In Nation**

In the third quarter of 2004, average weekly wages in Hudson County grew 5.6 percent over the year, the largest increase among New Jersey's 15 counties with annual average employment of 75,000 or more. Gloucester County was second with wage growth of 5.4 percent. Regional Commissioner Michael L. Dolfman pointed out that Somerset County was the only one of New Jersey's 15 large counties to record an over-the-year decline in wages. (See table 1.) Moreover, Somerset County's drop of 6.9 percent was the third largest decrease among the nation's 317 large counties; Hudson County's increase, on the other hand, was the 34th largest.

At the State level, the average weekly wage in New Jersey increased 2.8 percent to \$876 in the third quarter of 2004, \$24 higher than a year ago. By contrast, the national increase was 4.0 percent. Although New Jersey's pay increase did not keep pace with national growth, the State's average weekly wage of \$876 remained roughly 20 percent higher than the U.S. average of \$733. The average weekly wage in New Jersey ranked fourth highest in the nation, behind Connecticut (\$917), Massachusetts (\$907), and New York (\$891), and ahead of California (\$829) and Maryland (\$795). (See table 2.)

Wage Levels

Among the largest counties in New Jersey, Somerset and Morris recorded the highest average weekly wages (\$1,093 and \$1,034, respectively) in the third quarter of 2004. (See table 1.) Somerset County's average weekly wage was 49.1 percent above the national average, ranking 9th among the 317 largest counties, while Morris County's wage ranked 12th. Six other counties (Hudson, Essex, Middlesex, Bergen, Union, and Mercer) ranked in the top 30 nationally. Overall, 12 of the 15 large counties in New Jersey had wages above the U.S. average. The three counties with wages below the national weekly wage were Gloucester, Atlantic, and Ocean, averaging \$679, \$666, and \$623, respectively.



Round-the-clock recorded messages for the **Consumer Price Index** and a variety of other **Bureau of Labor Statistics** data are available by dialing the **New York Information Office's** main telephone number: (212) 337-2400. For recorded messages, press '2.' Press '1' for 24-hour Fax-on-Demand service.

Among the 317 large counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,327 in the third quarter of 2004. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,308, followed by Washington, D.C. (\$1,207), and Arlington, Va. (\$1,196). Three of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.), three others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco, all in California), while three more were located in or around the Washington D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C., Arlington, Va., and Fairfax, Va.). The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$468), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$475); Horry, S.C. (\$487); Webb, Texas (\$496); and Yakima, Wash. (\$500).

Over-the-Year Changes

Five of New Jersey's large counties (Hudson, Essex, Gloucester, Middlesex, and Passaic) recorded wage growth greater than or equal to the national increase of 4.0 percent in the third quarter of 2004. Hudson County's 5.6-percent wage gain ranked 34th highest in the nation and Gloucester County's 5.4-percent increase ranked 44th. Wage growth was particularly sluggish in several New Jersey counties -- Morris, Camden, and Mercer -- but only one, Somerset, recorded a decline.

St. Joseph, Ind., led the nation in average weekly wage growth with an increase of 10.4 percent. Suffolk, Mass., was second with a gain of 9.1 percent, followed by the counties of Loudoun, Va. (8.4 percent), Rockingham, N.H. (8.1 percent), and Arlington, Va. (7.7 percent). Seven large counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages led by Kalamazoo County, Mich. (-7.7 percent). Arapahoe, Colo. (-7.3 percent) was next, then Somerset County, N.J. (-6.9 percent), and King, Wash. (-2.4 percent). (A change in the definition of wages covered by unemployment insurance in the State of Washington contributed to the decline in King County.)

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.4 million employer reports cover 130.2 million full- and part-time jobs. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number then is divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or States for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all States, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2003* is available for sale from the BLS Publications Sales Center, P.O.

Box 2145, Chicago, Illinois 60690, telephone 312-353-1880. The 2003 bulletin is now available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn03.htm>.

News releases on quarterly measures of gross job flows also are available upon request from the Division of Administrative Statistics and Labor Turnover (Business Employment Dynamics), telephone 202-691-6467; (<http://www.bls.gov/bdm/>); (e-mail: BDMInfo@bls.gov). Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

NOTE

QCEW data are simply the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

Also, the preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site . The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review, and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. No adjustments are made for changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary activity), because these changes are due to an actual event. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered ^{1/} employment and wages in the United States and the 15 largest counties in New Jersey, third quarter 2004 ^{2/}

Area	Employment	Average weekly wage ^{3/}			
	September 2004 (thousands)	Average Weekly Wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, 2003-04 ^{4/}	National ranking by percent change
United States.....	130,248.9	\$733	—	4.0	—
New Jersey.....	3,918.8	876	—	2.8	—
Atlantic.....	147.3	666	196	2.9	224
Bergen.....	447.7	910	30	2.9	224
Burlington.....	198.8	789	73	3.5	187
Camden.....	210.8	741	107	2.2	272
Essex.....	357.4	947	21	4.3	116
Gloucester.....	100.4	679	177	5.4	44
Hudson.....	234.4	980	13	5.6	34
Mercer.....	217.4	934	24	1.5	290
Middlesex.....	392.0	938	23	4.0	138
Monmouth.....	254.9	786	76	3.7	163
Morris.....	281.3	1,034	12	2.3	270
Ocean.....	148.9	623	252	3.1	209
Passaic.....	178.1	786	76	4.2	120
Somerset.....	166.1	1,093	9	-6.9	310
Union.....	232.1	912	29	^{5/}	—

^{1/} Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

^{2/} Data are preliminary.

^{3/} Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

^{4/} Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for any noneconomic county reclassifications.

^{5/} Data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards.

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages by state, third quarter 2004²

Area	Employment	Average weekly wage ³			
	September 2004 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, 2003-04 ⁴	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁵	130,248.9	\$733	-	4.0	-
Alabama	1,858.0	629	33	3.6	37
Alaska	314.2	755	13	3.4	42
Arizona	2,357.6	691	22	4.9	10
Arkansas	1,145.7	570	45	5.2	7
California	15,106.6	829	6	3.9	32
Colorado	2,163.4	752	15	1.1	50
Connecticut	1,642.1	917	2	5.4	5
Delaware	414.9	769	9	2.1	49
District of Columbia	658.3	1,207	1	7.6	1
Florida	7,397.2	655	27	4.5	16
Georgia	3,837.8	711	19	3.8	35
Hawaii	585.6	676	24	4.5	16
Idaho	608.1	569	46	0.4	30
Illinois	5,747.7	779	8	3.9	32
Indiana	2,887.8	655	27	4.5	16
Iowa	1,431.8	604	37	4.1	24
Kansas	1,304.8	620	34	4.6	13
Kentucky	1,742.9	619	35	4.4	19
Louisiana	1,861.1	595	41	2.8	47
Maine	608.8	603	39	4.3	21
Maryland	2,479.5	795	7	4.2	23
Massachusetts	3,156.5	907	3	5.5	4
Michigan	4,344.5	757	10	3.4	42
Minnesota	2,629.9	753	14	3.2	44
Mississippi	1,113.8	540	49	3.6	37
Missouri	2,656.2	655	27	0.3	46
Montana	41.3	525	51	3.6	37
Nebraska	887.4	601	40	3.6	37
Nevada	1,168.5	703	21	4.1	24
New Hampshire	622.6	731	16	6.1	2
New Jersey	3,918.8	876	5	2.8	47
New Mexico	769.3	588	43	4.1	24
New York	8,307.9	891	4	5.3	6
North Carolina	3,814.9	654	30	4.1	24
North Dakota	327.2	548	48	0.4	30
Ohio	533.3	685	23	4.1	24
Oklahoma	1,435.7	581	44	3.9	32
Oregon	1,627.6	676	24	3.7	36
Pennsylvania	5,531.4	722	17	4.3	21
Rhode Island	484.6	708	20	4.6	13
South Carolina	1,799.2	604	37	4.1	24
South Dakota	375.5	538	50	4.9	10
Tennessee	2,668.6	659	26	4.4	19
Texas	9,357.6	719	18	3.6	37
Utah	1,084.4	607	36	3.2	44
Vermont	30.2	634	32	5.8	3
Virginia	3,522.7	757	10	4.6	13
Washington	2,749.9	756	12	0.4	51
West Virginia	693.1	559	47	5.1	8
Wisconsin	2,745.6	653	31	4.8	12
Wyoming	253.6	590	42	5.0	9

¹ Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

² Data are preliminary.

³ Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

⁴ Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for any noneconomic county reclassifications.

⁵ Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.